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OTIS

LETTERS

DEVELOPING

THE CHARACTER AND VIEWS

OF THE

HARTFORD CONVENTION:

BY

"ONE OF THE CONVENTION."

FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER, IN
JANUARY 1820.

WASHINGTON:

1820.

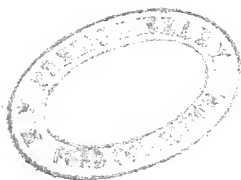


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FIG. 1



PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

There exists no special inducement that should render the writer of the following letters more anxious than any other member of the Hartford Convention to become its champion. But, as it may be natural to enquire wherefore the publication of the private journal has been so long delayed and why this moment is selected for calling to it the public attention I have no objection to gratify a reasonable curiosity.

In the winter session of Congress of 1817-18, I became acquainted with many respectable and eminent men of the late administration party, and frequently conversed with them upon the course of measures and the views and state of parties in the Eastern States during the war; with an unreservedness on both sides, which, in that period of ardent controversy, had been forbidden by the total alienation of social feeling among persons of contradictory politics. In these conversations *I first* became persuaded that the clamors raised against the Convention (*"non vi sed sæpe cadendo,"* and which the members of that body had treated with silent contempt,) had made a profound impression upon many intelligent minds. On one of those occasions, a gentleman of eminent character and station gave me to understand that however individuals having access to the true sources of information, might be made satisfied of the innoxiousness of that assembly, yet the general propensity to suspicion in relation to their proceedings, would not subside, until the secret journal should be brought to light.—It is a most

solemn truth, that, from the epoch of the dissolution of the Convention to that moment, not a thought of that journal or its contents had been in my mind. I had no recollection, (nor have I at this moment) of having ever inspected its pages, while it was in progress ; and of so little moment was its fate in my estimation, that I had forgotten the disposal made of it by the Convention, and presumed it was left with the Secretary. There was no hesitation however on my part, in pledging myself that it should be forthcoming, under a full persuasion that the members could have no objection to publish to the world all that was said or done in that Convention. I forthwith wrote to Mr. Dwight, then at New-York, requesting information of its depository. That gentleman, being confined by sickness, was obliged to defer a reply for several weeks, and then reminded me of its being left, by order of the Convention, with the venerable late President, George Cabot. In an interview with this gentleman, (whose name in the minds of those who know him is ever associated with all the virtues which can adorn the character of man) I apprized him of my conviction, resulting from the above mentioned conversations, of the expediency of making the journal accessible to public inspection. He readily assented to the opinion, but observed that, as it had been deposited with him pursuant to a vote of the Convention, and kept in its original envelope, he conceived that respect for the surviving members required that their consent should be had to a change of its destination. In the course of the Summer I met with four other members, at different times, who agreed to the proposed disposition of the journal, and suggested that the original should be sent to the Executive of Massachusetts, and deposited among the public records. In the month of October following, with the approbation of the late President, the following circular letter was written by me, and a copy sent to each surviving

member living in situations remote from each other.

"DEAR SIR: It has occurred to me that justice to the States represented in the late Hartford Convention seems to require that the private journal of their proceedings should be deposited in some place to which access may be had by any person disposed to give them publicity. You need not be informed of the disposition of a numerous class, to impute to that Convention projects that would not bear the light, and to produce if possible a general opinion that the things which are seen afford no clue to the unholy mysteries of our conclave. While as individuals we regard these efforts with unconcern, we ought not perhaps to be indifferent to the effects of an erroneous public opinion on this subject upon the present age and posterity; if the mere unvarnished journal would be sufficient for its correction. Mr. Cabot, Mr. Prescott, and other members in this vicinity concur in these sentiments, and if you should be content that we may make such a disposition of that journal as may be thought best for the object here expressed, I request of you the favor to signify your acquiescence by a line to Mr. Cabot with convenient despatch."—Signed, — —

From all these persons thus written to, (except two who made no reply that ever came to hand,) answers were duly returned, giving a full and unqualified assent to the proposal contained in the letter—one of these answers is subjoined, as a specimen of the spirit of the whole of them, and is selected merely for its conciseness.

Providence, Nov. 6th, 1818.

"SIR: I received a letter a few days since from Mr. — informing me that it was the opinion of the gentlemen in Boston who were mem-

bers of the Hartford Convention, that the private journal of that convention ought to be deposited in some public place, where it may be kept in safety, and at the same time be accessible to those who might hereafter wish to form a correct estimate of the motives by which they were influenced. I most sincerely con-
 cide with the gentlemen in Boston who formed so respectable a part of that body, and I wish that the American people may at some future period be truly informed of every thing that was thought, said, or done, on that momentous occasion; they will then be able to decide who were the real friends to the constitution and liberties of our country.

I have the honor to be, with the greatest respect,
 your obedient servant,

D. LYMAN."

Honorable George Cabot.

After receiving these answers, Mr. Cabot transmitted the book to the Governor of Massachusetts, accompanied by the following letter :

"Boston, Dec. 17, 1818.

"SIR. The Hartford Convention having given to the public the result of all their proceedings, left in my hands their original journal. The ultimate disposal of this document did not appear so important as to require their particular direction; unwilling however to leave it in the event of my decease to the chances which may befall private papers, I have concluded, with the concurrence of my associates, that it would with propriety be placed in the archives of the State which first recommended the meeting of the Convention. Accordingly, I have to request your Excellency's permission to deposit it in the office of the Secretary of this Commonwealth.

I have the honor to be, with the highest con-

sideration and respect, your Excellency's most obedient servant,

GEO. CABOT."

His Excellency Governor Brooks.

This transaction happened during my second absence from Boston, and upon my return I obtained the certified copy which I have now given to the Editors of the National Intelligencer.

ONE OF THE CONVENTION.

HARTFORD CONVENTION.

LETTER I.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER.

Gentlemen :

I herewith send you an attested copy of the private journal of the convention held at Hartford during the late war. The original, with the consent of all the surviving members, obtained in writing. (a) under their hands, at a distance from each other, and without any inter-communication, has been long since deposited in the public archives of the state of Massachusetts, by the late President of the Convention, accompanied by his certificate of its being the original, authentic, and only journal of the proceedings of that body.

As the powers of that Convention were derived from public legislative acts, and the report of its proceedings was also published in the time of them ; it is manifest that nothing was wanting to put the public in possession not only of all which the Convention could have authority to do, but of all which it actually proposed to do, and did in fact ; except this journal.

This transcript is, therefore, with your permission to be deposited on your shelf, solely to the end, that an opportunity may be afforded to any persons at the seat of government, whose curiosi-

(a) These letters are in my possession, and at the service of yourselves, or any other gentleman who wishes to peruse them.

ty may prompt them to devote an half hour to its perusal, of becoming acquainted with the entire proceedings of that Convention, including all the motions, propositions, and resolutions which were therein offered or debated. Thus, by comparing the original report with the journal, it will conclusively appear, beyond all probability of doubt in any ingenuous mind, *not only that no project for a separate confederacy, or in any other mode hostile to the integrity of the Union or the success of the war, was entertained or moved in that body, but that the original report did truly contain the substance of whatever was there meditated or transacted.*

Such, however, it is well known, is not the prevailing impression in many parts of this country, concerning the genuine character of that convention. The very name is a by-word, with thousands who never read its proceedings, which, by a talismanic influence presents at once to the disturbed and irritated imagination the spectres of disunion, and civil war and treason. And many, who, upon a perusal of the printed documents, could discern no sentiments deserving reprobation, (though at variance with their own) have been unable to divest themselves of a jealousy that the report was either a mere gloss for some dangerous machinations reserved for future execution, or the abortive offspring of a cabal, convened for purposes which some of the confederates had too little of nerve or too much of virtue, to accomplish. In a word, it is the firm persuasion of many, that the design and tendency of that Convention, was a dismemberment of the Union, and that the event of peace alone prevented the ripening of this combination to full and fatal maturity. This illusion is not confined to minds which are rendered, by prejudice or credulity, receptacles of gross and vulgar errors. In many instances it has beguiled the understanding of men, gifted with powers of discrimination, and

disposed to the exercise of candor, but habitually reposing too exclusively upon partial sources of information. It is no reproach to persons of this description (which is not common to our nature,) that they have not always investigated the evidence by which their judgment of the views and measures of political antagonists should be regulated. Amid wars and the dissensions which grow out of them in free states, the portraits which contending factions draw of each other are always received as likenesses, by those who are unacquainted with, and disposed to think ill of the originals. Mutual jealousies are entertained of intentions to proceed to violent extremes, and the most absurd fictions of malice and party hatred are swallowed with implicit faith by the "wisest," as well as the "meanest of mankind." The wretched fabrication of the popish plot, diffused throughout England prepossessions, against which no vigor of intellect was proof; and an implacable hatred of Catholics, which time and the executioner were necessary to appease. False plots and conspiracies, traitorous correspondence and seditious conclaves, constitute important parts in the machinery of all wars, whether foreign or civil, and it is through the instrumentality of these, that the most powerful appeals are made to the imaginations and passions of men. (b)

It can hardly be supposed that the irritation produced by the conflict of opinion respecting the late

(b) It was matter of regret and astonishment to me, to discover, (about two years ago for the first time,) that out of New England, many federalists had been led to believe in this ideal creation of a separation of the states.— But it is matter of amusement to observe, *in New England, here and there*, federalists whose zeal in favor of a Convention was the only inducement for their friends to accept the trust, now assenting with great self-complaisance to the discrimination sometimes attempted to be made between the Conventioners and their constituents. "Thank God, I am not like this publican." For this there is no excuse but a *short memory*.

war, has so entirely subsided, that a patient hearing might be expected of a vindication of the conduct of the states or individuals who disapproved of that measure. And no disposition is felt, at this moment, to undertake their defence, or even to disturb the opinion of those who protest against the legitimacy of all conventions of states, or against the special acts of the Hartford Convention. But as the distinction of the great parties of the nation no longer appears in a conflict of opinions and interests, but has assumed the character of mere personal competition: and, as the passions which perpetuate the contentions for civil and religious rights, in governments where these are at issue, ought not to rankle, long after their causes have ceased, in the bosoms of a people who differ only in regard to the means of promoting a national welfare, of which all are equally entitled to partake; it is hoped that it may not be too early to attempt to rectify *errors in fact*, which originate in misconception, and which, without affording support to any system of political opinions, are calculated to infuse a stain upon the character of one part of the nation, and to cherish acrimonious feelings and contentions, from which no advantage, but probably discredit and injury, may result to the whole. For this purpose solely, and without questioning the soundness or rectitude of any particular opinions, or the wisdom of any public measures; without even fanning the embers of expiring fires, I wish to avail myself of the vehicle of your paper, to refer such of your readers as feel an interest in the enquiry, to such considerations and facts as may enable them to decide upon the true character of the Hartford Convention.

LETTER II.

If the odious projects which are supposed by many to have been agitated and attempted in the Hartford Convention, concerned only the individual members, they probably would remain content to repose in silence for their justification upon their established private characters, and upon their standing in the esteem and confidence of the people among whom they are best known. Although a spirit of personal enmity and local rivalry may dictate to some, who are heated in the race for preferment, the expediency of holding up those members to public censure and proscription, it is still demonstrable that the reputation of states and not of individuals is directly implicated in those transactions. The enquiry affects the public spirit and virtue not only of legislative assemblies, but the vital soundness of the heart of the New England population. The Delegates to the Convention were principally agents in behalf of states, acting under public instructions which had been debated with open doors whose limitations they could not transcend. Among them were some, who exerted no influence in promoting the measure, and others who accepted the trust with unfeigned reluctance, but from a conviction of its being a duty to attempt to give to the project the most salutary direction. They possessed no authority, and were subject to no responsibility, but that which is common to legislative committees, empowered to report facts and opinions. The report which they made was equally a public document, accepted upon due deliberation by their several constituent legislatures, and thus entitled to be considered as the act of the people of those states. Thus an immense majority of the people of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, and respectable portions of those of New Hampshire and Ver-

ment, are emphatically responsible for the organization of that Convention, and the sanction bestowed upon its result. There is no presumption that they were the dupes of leaders or taken by surprise. A suggestion, so reproachful to an intelligent and independent people, vanishes before the recollection of the repeated opportunities offered them for a change of men in the State Governments, and the general expression of opinion favorable to such a Convention in all quarters of the country. In Massachusetts especially, the Legislature was stimulated to action by the spontaneous movements of the people in their towns and counties. Petitions were heaped upon petitions, and the extra session, in which the Convention was proposed, was summoned to meet conformably to a manifestation of public solicitude too evident to be mistaken, and too imperative to be evaded.

It is then, be it repeated, the character of New England—of a great portion of the American fraternity—a character eminent for all the moral and political attributes which give value to the social compact, and for the qualities and virtues on which every good government relies for support, that is to be rescued from a disparagement which, in the view of the world, would attach to the reputation of the *nation*. For it is to dishonor the *nation*, that, whatever sounds to the discredit of any portion of it is collated, with mercenary zeal, by certain foreign purveyors of scandal, who are sent hither to collect either facts or falsehoods, wherewith to gratify the spleen or curiosity of their employers. Hence it is that idle tales, which, during the effervescence of party feeling, were poured forth against New England, in fugitive papers and pamphlets, and which the good sense of the nation would in time have assimilated to the legends of sorcery and witchcraft, are already, under the spell of certain travellers and reviewers, assuming the gravity of

true history, and seem to demand a contemporaneous refutation.

Let it now be supposed, in the way of argument, as quite possible, that the legislatures of those states, and the majority of the people, acted under erroneous views of their own interests, and of their duties to the nation. They may have been greatly mistaken in their construction of the constitutional charter, and have assumed untenable positions in their controversies with the national Executive. But the history of every confederacy of states, from the era of the Achæan league to our times, abounds in disputes respecting the mutual obligations of its members. They originate unavoidably in the imperfection of language, in the diversity of aspects under which objects are surveyed by different minds; sometimes in feelings and motives of genuine patriotism, and not unfrequently in ardent passions and oblique views of local interest.

In such dissensions it too often happens that the magnitude and danger of the emergency, which ought to suspend the spirit of controversy, augment its fierceness. One party must always be in the wrong; but it by no means follows that a misapprehension of right, because it happens to be chargeable upon the weaker or minor party, though defended with perseverance, and even excessive fervency, implies a disposition to secede from the confederacy. Nor does it consist with good policy or the interest of the confederates, because their voices are most numerous and loud, to stamp any symptom of supposed contumacy with this aggravated stigma, unless proved to deserve it by *overt acts*. Each state, in its turn, may incur this reproach. There is a striking resemblance in the tendency of the popular sentiment, (as the short annals of our government will shew,) in great as well as in small states, and in the districts of the South and the West, as well as of the East, under similar circumstances, to run

in the same channels of opposition and complaint—to stickle for state rights, and to remonstrate against alleged encroachments of the national authority, in tones susceptible of a menacing, at least of an equivocal, construction. While, then, severe invectives, and invidious comparisons of the merits, patriotism, enthusiasm, courage, and disinterestedness of the different states and sections of our nation, can produce at home no fruit but implacable jealousies, hatred, and intestine divisions, and consequently from abroad contempt and danger, the true friends of their country will be willing, in the absence of the causes which have alienated them from each other, to review the sources of their antipathies and prejudices, and magnanimously to renounce all such as are unsupported by correct and conclusive evidence.

LETTER III.

The imposture of the Popish plot, before alluded to, which will remain an eternal monument of the credulity to which a great and intelligent nation is liable, was countenanced by evidence more plausible than any which has authorised a belief in the chimera of a northern confederacy. A real and most atrocious conspiracy, the gunpowder treason, had preceded. It was raised upon the usual scaffolding of accusations, indictments, oaths, and judicial sentences. The oaths, indeed, were those of perjured monsters, and the charges an outrage upon common reason, and a violation of the congruities of time and place. But oaths and judgments, and the axe and the gibbet, are cogent arguments, by which not only the love of the marvellous is confirmed, but the faith of nations, religious and political, and sometimes their governments, are influenced and

changed. In this affair of the Convention, however, there has been from first to last, absolutely nothing corresponding with our common notions of the lightest historical evidence. Among the proceedings of the state of Massachusetts, which was regarded as the pioneer of opposition, no speech or message of the Executive, no report of a committee, no vote, resolution, or act, has ever been, or can be, presented, *which, taken together with its context*, can be tortured into the expression of a sentiment favorable to a dismemberment of the Union. On the contrary, in many of those public messages and answers, this object is explicitly disavowed, and the event regarded as a most deplorable possibility, which all were solemnly conjured to avert. It is believed also, that no speech or writing has ever been imputed to any Senator or Representative, either in or out of his place, even glancing at the expediency of a separation of the states; and that no expression of such an opinion from any meeting of citizens, formal or otherwise, entitled to be viewed as indicative of *a public sentiment*, can any where be found. It is true that some industrious compilers, (of a class who deny the pretensions of Clarendon, Temple, and Hume,* to be considered as writers of authentic history,) have embodied in their compilations, votes of corporations, extracts from sermons, and from the essays of anonymous writers in newspapers, in which the idea of a separation of the states is held forth as likely to become a choice of evils. But this whole far-rago of scraps, so far as I can find, does not concern more than half a dozen small towns, three or four clergymen, and the anonymous dealers in occasional squibs and paragraphs. Yet on this foundation is built, by one of these compil-

* See *Vindiciæ Hibernicæ*, and the *Olive Branch*, *passim*.

ers, "a deep, dangerous, and treasonable conspiracy among leading men to dissolve the Union."

It can require no effort of reason to satisfy every calm enquirer that the government of a state is not responsible for the effusions of the pulpit, or for the resolutions of towns or corporations. It has no power to bring a prelate to the block or to the stake, or to order his sermon to be burned by the hangman; neither can it muzzle the town meeting orators, or manacle the press. Intemperate and unguarded expressions, in times of excitement, escape from the lips and pens of the prudent, which neither the government, or the party whose policy they espouse, would sanction; and there will always be men, among friends and foes, who are constitutionally imprudent. In the harangues and essays of individuals, and in the proceedings of more than one assemblage of citizens, that adhered to the administration, during the same period, can be found without much research, sentiments, by which neither the Executive or Congress would agree to be concluded. Honest and mistaken zeal, and fervid imaginations, frequently impel individuals of the most upright characters and eminent talents into a tone of conversation and writing elevated much above the views of the party with whom they act. And if, on the occurrence of these indiscretions, they were exposed to the perpetual rebuke and disavowal of their friends, it is manifest that such a party would be decomposed and fall to pieces by the fermentation of its own materials. Admitting, however, that these suggestions are sufficient to exculpate the state legislatures from the imprudence of individuals not under their control; many will be ready to array a formidable catalogue of the Executive and Legislative proceedings of the state of Massachusetts, teeming with censures upon the policy of the administration which preceded the late war, and with bitter reprobation of the war itself. These, it has been insisted, en-

couraged a spirit of disunion, (which they might not express,) the tendency of which was towards a dissolution of the confederacy.

But the question here intended to be considered, is not the merit or correctness of these legislative proceedings, nor the effect upon the public mind which they might indirectly produce. The object is simply to repel the suggestion that the Hartford Convention was organized for purposes hostile to the Union, and adverse to the effectual defence of the country—these being the peculiar features which have been considered as distinguishing it from other measures. When this point is settled, the opposition of Massachusetts and of the New England people to the measures of government, and of the war, runs in a parallel with the opposition elsewhere ;† with that of the

† The Centinel of August 22, 1813, mentions a meeting in the city of New York, on the preceding Wednesday, at which were present John Jay, Rufus King, G. Morris, Richard Harrison, Egbert Benson, Matthew Clarkson, Richard Varick, and other distinguished individuals. At this meeting, resolutions were framed, expressive of the strongest disapprobation of the war, predicting its unhappy issue, impeaching the motives of administration, predicting an alliance with and subjugation by France; declaring that the question “of peace or war,” involves all that is dear and valuable on this side the grave; and, after calling on the people of the state to unite and declare their sentiments, it was resolved, “that Representatives be chosen in the several counties, discreet men, the friends of peace. These Representatives can correspond or *confer* with each other, and *co-operate with the friends of peace in our sister states*, in devising and pursuing such constitutional measures as may secure our independence and preserve our Union, both of which are endangered by the present war.” Members were accordingly chosen.

Again, September 17, 1812, a Convention of Delegates from 34 counties in New York, met at Albany, and passed an address to the President on the conduct of the National Rulers, and very *significant* resolutions.

At Staunton, in Virginia, a Convention of Delegates from eighteen of the most populous, wealthy, and respectable counties in the state, assembled, (the precise

minority of the Representatives in Congress, and the minorities of the people out of doors ; with the opposition in the state of New York, (led by men of great distinction, whose sins are forgiven ;) with the opposition in the legislature of Maryland, in some counties of Virginia, and other places ; perhaps sometimes a little in advance, but always distinguished more by its *locality* than by any other peculiar feature. Whoever will compare the language and the course of opposition in and out of New England, will be led to conclude that the former has been considered as more obnoxious, merely because it was more extensive. There is no difference in their nature, and none of moment in their degree. But in popular governments it cannot be a maxim that the offence of

date not now recollected,) and agreed upon a list of Electors of President and Vice President, friends to peace, &c. In their address, they call upon the people to co-operate in removing from office an administration which has nearly accomplished the annihilation of commerce. They denominate the war "unnecessary and impolitic," and say, "as friends to union, we invoke you to arrest the progress of a system tending to its speedy and awful dissolution."

In the Legislature of Maryland, the same temper prevailed, and the same *ideas*, in substance, were expressed.

At the moment in the late war, when intelligence reached Norfolk, in Virginia, of the destruction of the Capitol by the enemy, a General of Militia, (a Federalist,) then in the service of the United States, declared, in the bitterness of his anguish, that "with one arm he would expel the foe, and with the other pull down the existing administration." This gentleman, on the day that his having used these expressions, was admitted and excused by his friend in the House of Delegates of Virginia, was elected to the command of 10,000 regular troops, which that state had determined to raise for her own defence ; and this friend was chosen, by the same body, a Brigadier General of that army. I have this anecdote from one of the parties.

Instances to this effect might be multiplied without end. The language of the passions is natural and universal. I hope that a merciless intolerance will not prove to be local and perpetual.

opposition increases in heinousness in the ratio of the numbers concerned. The strong expressions of the disapprobation of the measures of a former administration, pervading the celebrated resolutions of Virginia and Kentucky, (which have not since been surpassed in emphasis, and tone, and *intelligible piquancy*,) were not allowed to be the more objectionable, in consequence of expressing the general voice of their people. We are openly assured that the people of Missouri will construe the constitution for themselves, if the exposition of Congress should be unfavorable to their views. And in Ohio, Kentucky, and Virginia, the obligatory force of the laws of the Union, as expounded by the highest judicial authority, is doubted or denied by persons in eminent stations, who probably consider themselves (& have always been reputed to be) good citizens.

Opposition in peace and in war, is the growth, & sometimes the blemish, of popular governments. When Chatham, Barre, Burke and Fox, and other illustrious men, put forth the energies of their mighty minds, and defended the rights of the American colonies, they were charged with promoting a separation of the empire. When the oppressions and the tears of Ireland are portrayed by those who have sympathy in her sorrows, and indignation for her wrongs, and impatience for her relief, how many have been ready to assail the Grattans and the Currans of the two last centuries with the cry of "treason," and stigmatise the advocates for her interests as the apostles of sedition and of a dismemberment of the empire! So it fared with the opposition in the British Parliament in every stage of the late contest with France, and such is the character and lot of all opposition. It pauses not to deal out remonstrance by grains and scruples, and consults no critical dictionaries for words of equivocal import. It must be dumb, or speak audibly; and, though it addresses its fellow-citizens, it must be

heard by the world. While it struggles, it is faction; when it triumphs, it is the people. Each opposition, in its turn, is branded with the imputation of aiming to undermine the constitution in time of peace, & in the season of war, of inspiring the enemy. Time rarely fails to shew the injustice of these accusations, which in their nature, are hardly applicable to great communities consisting of free citizens. Such a people may do wrong by mistake. They are open to erroneous impressions, unreasonable jealousies, to depression and enthusiasm, and to ardent passions: they may be blind to their interests, and for a time diverted from a sense of their duties. Whether the Eastern States, or any of them, may fairly be ranked as having been in this predicament, is not the issue now under examination. It is only contended, that the distance is immeasurable between a *general discontent* with the course of affairs, manifested by an ardent opposition, reasonable or otherwise, and a *disposition to dissolve the bonds* which hold together the political fabric.



LETTER IV.

The imaginary mystery which overshadows the history of the Hartford Convention is at once developed by confining the attention to the only fair and correct evidence which is admissible in the enquiry. This, it has been already intimated, is to be found only *in the record* of the proceedings of the legislative bodies which are to be considered as the framers of the project, or *in the acts* of the Convention itself. To the first we must look for the instructions and authority of the persons commissioned to act: to the last, for the result of their deliberations. There is no

other just criterion to which the measures of any representative body can be referred. In our daily researches we are habituated to no other. The measures of national assemblies, conventions, parliaments, and congresses, receive their characteristic stamp, in public opinion, from *their acts*. To presume that a legislative body, consisting of at least five hundred persons, as did that of Massachusetts, sitting constantly with open doors, could be capable of digesting a formula of instructions for its public agents, clothed in the solemnity of its usual sanctions, and published to the world, *with an understanding* that it should be regarded as *merely colorable*, and that the delegates to be appointed by them should exercise some *occult* functions, which had never been the subject even of debate, and which it was not expedient to define, is an idle suspicion, that must vanish before the first intimation, not merely of its variance from all usage and analogy, but of its practical impossibility. But the extravagance of the conjecture ends not here. It would not be sufficient for the legislature that should have first conceived this unrevealed scheme of disunion, to communicate its secret purpose, *by afflation*, to its immediate delegates. It was essential to the plan, that other states should be induced to co operate in its execution. Yet was there no conference or correspondence between these legislatures. They were not even in session at the same time. The only invitation given to them was in conformity to the two following resolves, which form the basis of the powers of the Convention, and which, with the resolves accompanying them, and the report of the committee whereon they were founded, and the circular letter written in pursuance of them, are all matters of public record, which were published in their day :

“ *Resolved*, That twelve persons be appointed as delegates from this commonwealth, to meet and confer with

delegates from the other states of New England, or any of them, upon the subjects of their public grievances and concerns, and upon the best means of preserving our resources, and of defence against the enemy, and to devise and suggest for adoption, by those respective states, such measures as they may deem expedient; and also to take measures, if they shall think proper, for procuring a convention of delegates from *all the United States*, in order to revise the constitution thereof, and more effectually to secure the support and attachment of *all the people*, by placing *all* upon the basis of fair representation."

"*Resolved*, That a circular letter from this legislature, signed by the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives, be addressed to the executive government of each of said states, to be communicated to their legislatures, explaining the objects of the proposed conference, and inviting them to concur in sending delegates thereto."

Upon such an invitation, the legislatures to whom it was addressed are to comprehend the hidden purpose of Massachusetts, and to communicate it, in their turn, *by inspiration*, to their delegates; who are ultimately to meet qualified and prepared to make or receive proposals, and settle preliminaries for a dissolution of the Union. What can be more egregiously absurd? It results, then, from internal and uncontrollable evidence, in the nature of things, that these legislatures could not have intended more than they expressed; and there is then left no refuge for the jealous mind, but in the belief that these delegates, or some of them, were inclined, *of their own mere motion*, and in contempt of their instructions, to enterprise a dismemberment of the Union, at the risk of the disavowal of their constituents, and their own consequent disgrace and confusion; and that to this end propositions were made by a minority, of which the majority would permit no trace to appear on their private journals, though requisite for their own vindication. To some such unfounded and extravagant conjecture, a resort is indispensable, by those who imagine that "more was intended than met the

eye," in the organization or proceedings of the Convention.

There is then no shadow of reason for any suspicion that the public report and private minutes of that assembly do not contain a full recital of its proceedings; and the idea that any part of them is suppressed, or in any particular varied from their original tenor, would imply either the concurrence of all the members, dispersed at great distances from each other, in a base fraud, or the commission of a fraud *upon them*, by the certifying officer. To the weakness as well as the indignity that would be couched in such an insinuation, no person acquainted with those individuals, will believe it can be necessary to anticipate a reply. These proceedings must, therefore, be brought to the test, by which those of other representative bodies are ascertained. *It is by the record only that the trial can be had*, and it is by departing from it into the extraneous regions of suspicion, and indulging a propensity natural in distempered times, to believe in plots and conspiracies, that the Hartford Convention has been distinguished as the most dangerous measure of opposition during the late war. Yet this is so remote from truth, that its history proves to demonstration, that it promised, beyond all other measures, had the war continued, to have been instrumental in aiding the defence of the country, and that its issue had an actual tendency to calm, and not to foment, the violence and danger of opposition in the Eastern states.

LETTER V.

The observations made in the preceding numbers seem, without any fallacy, to establish the correctness of the principle, that the powers giv-

en to the Hartford Convention, and their proceedings pursuant thereto, should constitute the only fair rules for estimating the views, motives and loyalty to the constitution of the states and individuals who were parties to its proceedings—and that they should be judged by the maxim, “by their fruits shall ye know them.” It is a most extraordinary truth, that, amid the censures which have been so copiously showered upon that body of men, there has been rarely an attempt to impeach, and never to criminate their printed proceedings. The cry has been—crucify, crucify, but none could reply to the question, what evil have they done? The political opinions asserted in their report may be right or erroneous; but they are not alleged to be unconstitutional. The amendments recommended to the constitution might be salutary or superfluous, still they were mere recommendations to be adopted or rejected by other states, at their pleasure. In all this, there may have been a defect of wisdom, but nothing that partakes of crime. So, because all that was known was innocent, the prophets, who found themselves at fault, would have it, that something was behind the curtain. The secrets of the prison house were not revealed—the masked battery had reserved its fire. In fact, they sat with closed doors. So, indeed, did sometimes the conventions of the early christians, yet Pliny could only report of them to Trajan, that they worship’d God daily, and encouraged each other in the practice of the duties of the man and the citizen. The Hartford Convention did nothing worse. To prove this truth to the conviction of every fair mind, it would be desirable, (now that the private journal is made accessible) to present to the public, in one connected view, the procedure of the legislative bodies and county meetings which were there represented, and the report of the Convention in extenso. But as more are swift to condemn than are willing to

read, and those of the latter description can easily have recourse to these documents, nothing more will be attempted here, than the introduction of such concise references to them as will substantiate the following to have been the two principal objects of the convention :

First. To provide for the defence of the Eastern States in a more efficient and economical mode, than could be done, under existing circumstances, by the General Government.

Second. To accelerate the adoption of certain amendments to the constitution, which were then considered to be of urgent and vital importance.

That this was the entire aim of that convention, will be more apparent, upon advertng for a moment to the state of affairs in New England, and especially in Massachusetts, at that epoch.

In the summer of 1814, the war, which had not before been brought home to that state, began upon its borders. Castine, an exposed settlement on the maritime frontier, (which could neither be defended or retaken without a naval force) had been captured ; and the intelligence received of a further meditated invasion, called for immediate measures of defence. The extensive seaboard was furnished with a few nominal fortresses, and (the troops of the United States having been withdrawn to Canada,) they were unprovided with men and munitions of war. Although the Governor of that State, two years before this time, had declined transferring the command of the militia to the military prefect of the United States, it is equally true, that he was now disposed to wave the constitutional objections which had influenced his conduct, and *had repeatedly ordered detachments, in precise conformity with the requisitions of the General Government.* Yet, such were the inconveniences arising from this compliance, owing to the jealousies and discontents among the officers and troops, and to the collision of different systems of tactics, *that, for*

this cause only, the Governor desisted from repeating orders for detaching the militia to serve under any officers but their own.

The emergency, however, was imperative.— Detachments were ordered, and the Treasury of the state threatened with empty vaults. All the sources of revenue were pre-occupied by the national taxes. Commerce was at end, and a general sentiment prevailing, that the sea coast would be exposed to desolation and ravage, without reliance upon any but their own protection.— Combined with these painful circumstances was a state of deep dissatisfaction with the policy which led to the war, and a persuasion that peace was at a fearful distance. These disasters were attributed (whether justly or not) to the unequal operation of certain provisions in the constitution of the United States, and fears were entertained by many lest the public feeling, roused to a high pitch of exasperation, would at length burst forth into some lamentable excess. Such an event was sincerely deprecated by persons of the greatest influence and consideration in every part of the state. Though by no means reconciled to the measures of government, or a belief in the original necessity of the war, they had generally despaired of stopping its progress by their opposition. Moreover, the persuasion became general, that, in the overthrow of the Despot of France, would be realized the extinction not only of the source of ultimate danger to the liberties of the nation, but of the principal causes of our internal feuds, and that a more auspicious order of things, according to their views, could hardly fail to result, under any administration, when peace should take place. They were also alarmed by a knowledge of the augmented means of annoyance now left at the disposal of the enemy, and not less convinced than their political adversaries, that a protection from the heaviest calamities of war could be found only in preparation

for the most vigorous defence. Under these circumstances, the Executive, having given orders to the whole militia to be in readiness, and to several corps of the elite to take the field, thought proper to convene the legislature, and communicate to them his views of the approaching danger and embarrassments. The militia of that and of the contiguous maritime states, being generally well appointed, trained to the same habits of discipline, and attached to their officers, to whose command they were familiarized, the opinion became prevalent that those states might concert a plan for their local defence, which would not only add greatly to their security, but actually conduce to the safety and economy of the nation, if any expedient could be devised whereby they might be allowed to defray the expense, by retaining or receiving back a portion of the revenue raised among themselves. And here it may not be impertinent to remark, that, although this scheme was considered by some as not only inadmissible but derogatory to the honor of the national government, yet, within a few weeks of this period, an act of Congress was passed, authorising the employment of state troops under their own officers, the provisions of which approximated so nearly *to this same scheme*, and to all that Massachusetts and Connecticut had requested, that, had it been enacted in an earlier stage of the war, there would, in all probability, never have existed either a misunderstanding with the National Government concerning the militia, nor a Hartford Convention. Besides this very momentous object of defence, it was also a generally received opinion that the interests of the Eastern section of the Union required important amendments to be made to the constitution, which could not be effected in the mode prescribed in that instrument; and, that, if the war should continue, it was not improbable that a disposition might be excited in a great majority of

the states and people, favorable to such amendments. But it was also thought that, if, upon due deliberation, it should be manifest that the public grievances admitted of no remedy without convulsive efforts, dangerous to the public peace, and repugnant to the constitution; in that case, an exposition of the rights and duties and interests of the people, showing such a remedy to be worse than the disease, would come from such a Convention with a weight of influence and favor that would reconcile the people to sustain with patience the inevitable evils of their condition, rather than to resort to expedients, of which no human foresight could reach the chances and events.

LETTER VI.

Immediately upon the meeting of the Legislature of Massachusetts, a joint committee was appointed upon the Governor's message, which in due time made a report, the preamble of which commenced with a recital of what they conceived to be the posture of affairs, and ended with the following conclusion, which, as it comprehended the whole scope of the proposed Convention, is here given verbatim :

"It is therefore with great concern that your committee are obliged to declare their conviction, that the constitution of the United States, under the administration of the persons in power, has failed to secure to this commonwealth, and, as they believe, to the eastern section of this Union, those equal rights and benefits which were the great objects of its formation, and which they cannot relinquish without ruin to themselves and posterity. These grievances justify and require vigorous, persevering, and peaceable exertions, to unite those who realize the sufferings and foresee the dangers of the country, in some system of measures to obtain relief, for which the ordinary mode of procuring amendments to the constitution

tion affords no reasonable expectation, in season to prevent the completion of its ruin. The people, however, possess the means of certain redress, and when their safety, which is the supreme law, is in question, these means should be promptly applied. The framers of the constitution made provision to amend defects, which were known to be incident to every human institution, and the provision itself was not less likely to be found defective, upon experiment, than any other parts of the instrument. When this deficiency becomes apparent, no reason can preclude the right of the *whole people*, who were parties to it, to adopt another; and it is not a presumptuous expectation, that a spirit of equity and justice, enlightened by experience, would enable them to reconcile conflicting interests, and obviate the principal causes of those dissensions which unfit government for a state of peace and of war—and so to amend the constitution as to give vigor and duration to the union of the states. But, as a proposition for *such a convention*, from a single state, would probably be unsuccessful, and our danger admits not of delay, it is recommended by the committee that, in the first instance, a conference should be invited between those states, the affinity of whose interests is closest, and whose habits of intercourse, from their local situation and other causes, are most frequent, to the end that, by a comparison of their sentiments and views, some mode of defence suited to the circumstances and exigencies of those states, and measures for accelerating the return of public prosperity, may be devised; and also to enable the delegates from those states, should they deem it expedient, to lay the foundation for a radical reform in the national compact, by inviting to a future Convention a deputation *from all the states in the Union*. They therefore report the following resolves, which are submitted—”

Here follow the resolves recited in a former letter, and others which are entirely confined to the raising and organizing of troops for the defence of the commonwealth. It must seem incredible to many who have permitted themselves to be transported by indignation and prejudice against that Convention, upon the faith of the misrepresentation made of its views, that a report conceived in such terms (however variant from their own opinions of propriety) should be the *whole platform* of its authorities, operations and end. Yet such was the fact. The daily proceedings of

the Members of the Convention, from the time of their meeting to their dissolution, may now be seen by any person, and may be published by whoever believes that any public use or gratification would result from so dry a detail, and who will reprint, in connexion with it, the entire report. But, believing that this has now ceased to be a subject of general interest, and that it may not again be reprinted, I proceed with such of the proposed extracts as are applicable to this enquiry. After some general complaints, and an expression of a hope of "a reformation of public opinion," and that our brethren in the South "will have seen that the great and essential interests of the people are common to the South and to the East," and a caution against "checking these favorable tendencies," we find these sentiments :

"Finally, if the Union be destined to dissolution by reason of the multiplied abuses of bad administrations, it should, if possible, be the work of peaceable times and deliberate consent. Some new form of confederacy should be substituted among those states which shall intend to maintain a federal relation to each other. Events may prove that the causes of our calamities are deep and permanent. They may be found to proceed not merely from the blindness of prejudice, pride of opinion, violence of party spirit, or the confusion of the times, but they may be traced to implacable combinations of individuals or of states, to monopolize power and office, and to trample, without remorse, upon the rights and interests of the commercial sections of the Union. Whenever it shall appear that these causes are radical and permanent, a separation, by equitable arrangement, will be preferable to an alliance, by constraint, among nominal friends, but real enemies, inflamed by mutual hatred and jealousies, and inviting, by intestine divisions, contempt and aggression from abroad. *But a severance of the Union by one or more states, against the will of the rest, and especially in time of war, can be justified only by absolute necessity. These are among the principal objections against precipitate measures, tending to disunite the states ; and, when examined in connexion with the farewell address of the Father of his Country, they must, it is believed, be deemed conclusive.*"

One clause more shall be here quoted :

“With this view [to defence] they suggest an arrangement, which may at once be consistent with the honor and interest of the national government and the security of these states. This it will not be difficult to conclude, if that government should be so disposed. By the terms of it these states might be allowed to assume their own defence by the militia or other troops. A reasonable portion, also, of the taxes raised in each state, might be paid into its Treasury, and credited to the United States, but to be appropriated to the defence of such state, to be accounted for with the United States. No doubt is entertained that, by such an arrangement, this portion of the country could be defended with greater effect, and in a mode more consistent with economy and public convenience, than any which has been practised. Should an application for these purposes, made to Congress by the state legislatures, be attended with success, and should peace, upon just terms, appear to be unattainable, the people would stand together for the common defence, until a change of administration, or of disposition in the enemy, should facilitate the occurrence of that auspicious event.”

Is it not natural here again to pause, and express astonishment, that the framers of an address containing these propositions should be obnoxious to the charge of a plot to separate the states, or a willingness to embolden the pretensions and advances of the enemy? These sentiments (which are by no means the only ones of the same bearing) are, indeed, coupled with many others of glowing expostulation and indignant complaint; but among them not a sentence or a line adapted to impair the full force of the admonitions to *union* and *defence*. In short, it may justly be doubted, whether there be any document extant, except the Farewell Address of Washington, in which the vital importance of the Federal Union is more seriously inculcated than in the report of that Convention, whatever may be its demerits in other respects. In one view, perhaps, it was destined to make even a deeper impression on those to whom it was addressed; for, though the valediction of the Father of his country was conceived in terms of unrivalled pathos, and his warning voice was as that of an an-

gel, while the Deputies at Hartford spoke only the language of plain men ; yet he could only prophecy of the future trials which awaited the disciples of the Federal faith. But the Convention, by alluding to the address of Washington, enforced the virtue and duty of steadfastness to its principles upon those who, smarting, as they imagined themselves, under vexations and sufferings arising from the operation of the Federal constitution, were more exposed to the suggestions of scepticism and the impulse of feeling. The publication of the report of the Convention produced the immediate effect of calming the public mind throughout New England. Its friends were satisfied with the correctness of the course prescribed, and its adversaries generally reconciled to its moderation. A few only were filled with irritation and bitter disappointment, who, having feasted on the expectation that their political opponents would resort to some desperate extreme, and persuaded others to fear what themselves hoped, have never been able to forgive the Convention for baffling their calculations. It is in the recollection of all that this report having been accepted, agents were deputed from some of the states, with instructions to attempt to make the arrangement with the general government, in regard to the employment of *local* troops, and the means of supporting them, that was therein proposed. But their principal object was anticipated by Congress, in the enactment of the law* heretofore

*The first section of this act provides, "That the President of the United States be, and he hereby is, authorized and required to receive into the service of the United States any corps of troops which have been, or may be, raised, organized, and officered, under the authority of any of the states, whose term of service shall not be less than twelve months ; which corps, when received into the service of the United States, shall be subject to the rules and articles of war, *and employed in the state raising the same, or in an adjoining state, and not elsewhere, except with the assent of the Executive of the state so raising the same.*

quoted. This, and another act which had passed the Senate, providing for the payment of the militia already employed by the several states, (and which, it was presumed, would have passed the House, had peace been delayed,) embraced the most material objects of that mission, and would have tended greatly to appease the discontent of New England, in the further progress of the war.

LETTER VII.

The remarks suggested, and the documents quoted, in the foregoing letters, evidently place it in the power of all who see fit to read them, to become equally conversant with the whole history of the Hartford Convention, and its proceedings, as are the surviving members of that body. It is not less certain, from the same evidence, that nothing more was done, or recommended to be done, in opposition to the measures of government, than had appeared in other states and districts, and public meetings of people who were reluctant in the prosecution of the war. No topic of complaint or remonstrance was there urged, which had not been before insisted on, with equal, and sometimes more impassioned vehemence, both within and without the walls of Congress. They neither counselled or proceeded to any overt act of resistance to the laws, or threatened the slightest violation of the forms of the constitution. The extent of their offending consisted merely *in the mode* adopted to give weight and efficacy to opinions and theories, which, though not before condensed under a sanction so formal, were familiar to the dissentients from the policy of the administration, in every section of the country. The aggravations of their political errors, if such they were, are reducible to the simple act of *conven-*

ing, as deputies from states, and speaking with one accord, but do not consist in the intrinsic unlawfulness, or even peculiarity, of their language or actions. Concerning the expediency of conventions of states for these or other purposes, it is difficult for any one member to speak with propriety, as none is authorized to express the private sentiments of the rest. But it may safely be affirmed of them, (with one exception,) that no equal number of men surpassed them in pretensions to moral worth, sound sense, political experience, and the enjoyment of public confidence in their respective states ; none whose fidelity to the Union was guarantied by stronger pledges, and to whose welfare and happiness any revolutionary struggle would have been more disastrous ; and, it may be added, none, of whom so large a portion had bid adieu to the allurements and cares of offices and honors, and retired spontaneously to the shade of private life. It is presumable that such men, acting from the conviction of their understandings at the time, would not now incline to perform penance, or propitiate favor at the expence of their independence, and sincerity, and dignity of character ; yet it is certain that many, if not all of them, would candidly admit that, with a knowledge *since* acquired of the extreme jealousy and misrepresentation to which a convention of states must ever be obnoxious, they would find no inducement, even with the purest motives, to give countenance to a measure which, by offending public opinion, would be divested of the power of doing good. As the amendments to the old confederation, (in other words, the federal constitution itself,) grew out of conventions of delegates from a few states, who were convinced of its defects, it was not unnatural that the same expedient should occur to those who were solicitous for still further amendments. Besides which, the proximity of the New England states to each other, and the continuity of the line of their maritime

frontier, seemed to demand, in the progress of the war, a unity of plan of defensive operations, that should comprehend the whole, under whatsoever authority it might be conducted—as much so, for instance, as Virginia might have required such a plan for herself. And their inhabitants, being the same people, with institutions, civil and military, differing only by almost imperceptible shades, and assimilated in all their habits and modes of conducting public affairs, might readily have been expected to devise for the exigency better means than could suddenly have been suggested by those whose attention was called to a more extensive theatre. But since the epoch of that Convention, new views, and subjects of grave and more deliberate reflection, are opened upon most minds, in the rapid settlement of our newly acquired regions. As the number of states augments, a greater scope is afforded for imaginary diversities of local interests, and for powerful coalitions to extort concessions from the Union. It is more easy to foresee (with the opportunity that time has afforded for ruminating upon these new and interesting relations) than it would be either wise or decorous to specify, disadvantages incident to these partial Conventions; and it is, therefore, not to be wished that resort should be had to them, even for the attainment of constitutional objects.

Unless I am greatly deceived, the following inferences conclusively result from the facts and authorities cited in the foregoing letters:—

1. That the members of the Hartford Convention were deputies from states and counties, which are responsible for their doings.

2. That the aim and proceedings of the framers and members of it, can be estimated only from the documentary evidence appertaining to the subject.

3. That this evidence exhibits no feature of a

plan adverse to the union of the states, or the success of the war.

4. That, on the contrary, its objects were to strengthen the union, and to defend the country.

5. That they violated neither law or constitution, and the effect of their doings was an assuagement of the discontents in the Eastern states.

6. That the only two indulgencies which they proposed to ask of government, one (namely the faculty of raising a local force under their own officers) had been substantially granted before application could be made, and that a provision for the other (namely, the payment of the militia) had passed the Senate of the U. States, and was pending in the House when peace took place.

7. That the grievances and complaints designated in the report, are the same with those which were alleged by the opposition *out* of New England.

Those friends of their country, will not be anxious to resist these conclusions, who regard its progress towards greatness and happiness as connected with the extirpation of local prejudices, and the assendancy of that sympathy of national feeling which should unite us as a people. It could not be conducive to the interests of the states South or West of New-England, to establish the fact, that in the infancy of this confederacy, that important section, or even a considerable portion of its inhabitants, were disposed to secede from it. Such a persuasion could not fail to affect the comfort and diminish the confidence of every well wisher to its duration, who should consider this disposition as betraying a heartlessness and inconstancy unequal to sustain the trial of adversity, which there could be no foundation to conclude would be confined to geographical limits. New-England, it should be recollected, was the birth-place of American Union. It was in these ancient provinces, that, nearly two centuries ago, the first project of union for their own defence

was matured. And these are the colonies which united again to protect not only themselves but their sister colonies from the bayonet and tomahawk, which elevated the name and glory of British America in the estimation of the world, and confounded the schemes of France for its entire subjugation, by their achievements at Louisbourg and Crown Point; and in Acadia and Canada, on many memorable occasions. It was in New-England that the rights of the colonies were first promulgated; that the watchword "*join or die*," was thundered from her mountains; and it was New-England blood that first cried from the ground at Lexington and Charlestown, for vengeance and for union. When the old confederation was expiring of incurable debility, the great mass of the New England people displayed their solicitude for a system of more perfect union, and hailed the adoption of the new constitution with joyful acclaim as the consummation of their best hopes. It is also known, that in that country the children pass from leading strings to schools, where they are accustomed to the restraints of discipline, and respect for authority, and where Washington's address is bound up in their books of elementary instruction. If, then, a people of this character, whose manners, customs, morals and institutions have been moulded by time, into the consistency which steady habits, industrious occupations local attachments, and strong prepossessions in favor of a federal government conceived almost in the cradle, may be supposed to impart—If, I say, such a people, or their chosen and distinguished men, in the first hour of trial—apostates from the example of their ancestors, and false to themselves—were capable of compassing the destruction of the fair fabrick of a constitution reared by their own hands—what reliance could be placed upon the adhesion of any other section of these states to the union, in any future conflicts of real or imaginary interests?

Whereon can repose our confidence in the firmness and constancy of states, whose ties are of recent origin, when those which all the considerations of mutual interests, dangers, sufferings, success, prosperity and glory should have bound with indissoluble strictness, are held together by so frail a ligature? Into what obscurity must sink the splendid visions of those who flatter themselves that the problem is at length solved, whereby national sentiment, under the guidance of federal wisdom, will triumph over the obstacles of geographical boundaries, the repulsion of local habits, the affinities of clannish interests, the enthusiasm of torrid and the phlegm of frigid climates, the restlessness of foiled ambition, and unprincipled intrigue? Well may they say farewell! a long farewell, to all our greatness.

To conclude:—The causes of the prejudices that have so generally prevailed against the Eastern states may be consolidated into one—an opposition of sentiment steadily manifested by one or more of those states, *in their aggregate capacity*, to the policy of the late administrations, and of the war. Much has been occasionally said of their opposition *in fact*; of combinations to prevent loans; and of others to cramp the southern banks by exhausting their specie. These charges are universally known, by all who have had patience to attend to the rambling suggestions on which they rest, as idle dreams or malignant calumnies. There is more color of truth in the accusation of their withdrawing the militia from the service of the United States: yet it is merely color. The militia were *not* withheld from *the* service, but, in *some* instances, from *the* command of officers of the United States; at first through constitutional doubts in the Executive, and latterly (*when those doubts were surmounted or waved*,) through difficulties and collisions among officers and men, which the Executives of those

states could not reconcile or control * *But the service never suffered for an instant.* The militia was constantly in requisition and on the alert. And such was the intelligence subsisting, and the arrangements made, between the executive of Massachusetts and the principal officers of the navy and army of the United States, for acting in concert, when occasion should require, as placed the country in the best possible state of defence, with the means at their disposal.† No impediments were offered to the enlistment of troops, and at least a full proportion of the regular army, and of the best regiments, were Yankees. All the taxes were paid, and all the legal requisitions of government, with the single qualification of the militia controversy, obeyed. The public opinion alone was unaccommodating; and the duty which is performed under a sense of its obligatory nature, is not always the less meritorious when accompanied by a sacrifice of opinion.

Since the restoration of peace, the temper manifested in the Eastern States by the men who have been supposed to possess the greatest influence, bears no stamp of a systematic opposition. The history of parties, in no period of the world, presents a parallel of so general a cessation of inimical demonstrations towards men, when measures have ceased to be obnoxious, as they have exhibited. In no instance have the views of ad-

* The militia of Massachusetts was organized upon the system of Steuben, and the regulations for detailing the companies, from the War Department, (without any law of the United States to that purpose,) broke up the companies, and, by throwing some officers out of command and detaching others from their men, excited the most serious dissatisfaction among all.

† This, though so contrary to the general impression, is a most solemn truth, supported by overwhelming evidence now on the files of the Congress of the United States, and, as to Boston and its vicinity, admitted under the hands of the Secretary of the Navy, in a letter to Commodore Bainbridge.

ministration been traversed by them in any shape of party opposition. Believing that the elements of the policy which they always approved, have gradually found favor with people and government, they shew no symptoms of spleen or disappointment. While they refrain from insincere and humiliating recantations, that would only merit contempt, they no longer throw the gauntlet in defence of opinions and theories, many of which, applied to a posture of affairs and a state of parties, which can hardly recur, and others of which could only produce unavailing disputes. We hear of no taunting allusions to what *might have been* the consequences of a protracted war, nor of any disposition to attack the vantage ground of its friends, by ascribing in any degree to fortune, what they claim for valor and for wisdom. Judging from their conduct, they are consoled for the loss of their popularity, by the occasional homage paid to their principles, and, if the nation prosper, they care not under what auspices the blessing is attained.

It would seem, then, to be a favorable moment for the citizens of this extensive and goodly heritage, to consider in how many points their real interests accord, and in how few they differ. Provincial distinctions of dialect, of customs, pursuits, and interests, with incomparably deeper marks than can be found among us, prevail in almost every other great nation, without checking the honest predilections which the free people of a common country ought to cherish for each other. To all who reflect upon the irresistible impulses, by which this immense empire is, and must be, moved, and upon the obstructions to which its vast machinery is liable at home and abroad, it must be obvious that not only the force and skill of those who superintend its direction, but a spirit of co-operation and mutual confidence are necessary to regulate its movement. And those, of all others, will have the least to boast on the

score of patriotism, who, in their professions of that rare virtue, mingle those bitter recollections and merciless invectives, which, in other nations, have kept alive the enmity of parties, through the magic of names, and the implacable resentments of individuals and families, (long after the causes of the original feuds have been forgotten) to the constant discomfort of the people, and final ruin of the state.

ONE OF THE CONVENTION,

i.e., Harrison G. His

see Sabin.



